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ABSTRACT

Levels of staff satisfaction across the United Kingdom's post-16 sector were examined by distributing a questionnaire at more than 80 further education colleges. The questionnaire elicited 9,515 responses. Study participants rated 38 statements on a 4-point scale. The questions focused on the following areas: (1) faculty members' perceptions of and relationship with their college; (2) their relationships with other staff; (3) their college's management style; (4) communication at their college; (5) their college's customers, and (6) their college's reputation, resources, and quality as a learning environment and as a workplace. More respondents were negative about their job and their college than were positive. Overall levels of satisfaction and job fulfillment appeared strongly linked to staff members' views as to whether the college "cared about them," whether they were valued, and whether they felt secure. Satisfaction was also strongly related to how effectively staff were communicated with, consulted, and involved in decision-making processes. The statements "My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively" and "Staff work well together in teams" received favorable ratings. Beacon and accredited colleges produced agreement ratings substantially higher than the average for the survey. (Twenty-one figures are included. The bibliography contains 10 references.) (MN)

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listening to staff

Peter Davies and Jane Owen

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- All our activity themes are backed by a programme of research and evaluation.
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listening to staff

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Note

The Learning and Skills Development Agency
was formerly known as FEDA.

Further information

The survey project was developed and managed and the free-text responses were coded by Jane Owen. The statistical analysis for this publication was carried out by Peter Davies.

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Introduction

'Our most valuable resource is our people' has become almost a cliché in some sectors. Although the statement is undoubtedly true, many managers fail to remember this as they go about their day-to-day business. People are an incredibly important resource for all organisations, particularly service-based organisations. In an increasingly competitive employment market, being able to find and keep good people will often be the deciding factor between an organisation succeeding or failing.

Background

The Learning and Skills Development Agency produced a survey to measure levels of staff satisfaction across the post-16 sector following approaches from a number of colleges. A pilot took place during summer 2000 in which over 80 colleges participated. A questionnaire was produced, which included a series of positive statements that respondents rated for importance and agreement. Free-text sections also featured. A total of 9515 completed questionnaires were received. Each questionnaire was analysed and the individual results and average baseline data from the sector were returned to the participating colleges during the autumn term.

The results raise some interesting issues, and this publication gives an insight into the views of college staff during summer 2000. It also describes ways in which individual organisations can assess their performance, including staff satisfaction.

The questionnaire

Participants were asked to rate 38 statements:

- for their strength of agreement
- and according to how important they thought the statements were to them as individuals.

Ratings were recorded using a four-point scale where 1 = very unimportant/strongly disagree and 4 = very important/strongly agree. In every case, the statements represented the characteristics and attributes of employment at a college that would generally be considered as desirable from the viewpoint of maximising job satisfaction.

In addition, staff were asked to indicate by means of a written response which one action could be taken to improve the culture of their college and were given the opportunity to raise any other issues.

Figure 1 The 38 positive statements

Me

1. I feel valued in this organisation.
2. I understand my role and the contribution I am making to the goals of the college.
3. My views are sought and considered.
4. I feel I have job security.
5. There is an opportunity for me to progress within the organisation.
6. My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively.
7. I have the authority to do a good job.
8. I get sufficient training to do my job effectively.
9. I get feedback from my manager on the work I do.
10. I would recommend the college as a good place to work.
11. I am not thinking of leaving the college.

Staff

12. Staff work well together in teams.
13. Staff views are sought and considered.
14. Staff are involved in planning improvements and setting targets.
15. Academic and support staff have shared goals.
16. Staff know what they are expected to do.
17. Staff know how well they are performing.
18. Staff receive appropriate training to make them effective in their job.
19. Staff feel they have job security.
20. Staff are committed to improving the quality of all aspects of the college.

Management style

21 Staff are not afraid to say what they really think.

22 Staff are encouraged to take risks or try new things without fear of failure.

23 Management see complaints as opportunities for improvement rather than threats.

24 Management are effective in making decisions about the organisation.

Communication

25 Communication is effective in this college.

26 Information about strategic and operational goals and performance are communicated effectively.

27 Information about the college is readily available.

28 Staff are given the information they need to do their job effectively.

Customers

29 The college encourages feedback from all its customers.

30 Complaints are dealt with effectively within the college.

College

31 The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision.

32 The college has a good future.

33 Education is central to the management strategy of the college.

34 Adequate resources are provided by the college for staff.

35 Staff workplaces are adequate.

36 Adequate resources are provided by the college for students.

37 Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.

38 The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.

Synopsis of the results

- The vast majority of respondents regarded all of the areas covered within the positive statements as important to themselves.
- More staff were negative about their job and their college than were positive.
- What happens within a college **does** make a substantial difference to staff attitudes, which are by no means determined entirely by the external educational environment.

Overall, the profile of staff opinion that emerged from the survey gives considerable cause for concern. This is particularly so in general FE/tertiary colleges. In our experience, it is uncommon for average ratings to be as negative within a single organisation and very rare for them to be so negative across a whole sector.

Two factors appeared to link strongly with overall levels of satisfaction and job fulfilment:

- whether or not the 'college cared about them'; whether or not they were valued; and whether they felt secure
- how effectively staff were communicated with, consulted and involved in the decision-making process.

Staff satisfied with both of these areas usually also took a positive view of other aspects of their job and college. If staff felt they were not valued or communicated with, this appeared to cloud their overall attitudes to their job and employer. It is worth noting here that a majority of staff in managerial positions as well as non-management staff had a negative opinion about the effectiveness of communications within their own college.

Staff perceptions of a college's management style seemed to determine whether or not they felt valued. The evidence does not suggest that feeling cared for or valued was the outcome of 'soft' management.

It seemed to be connected with an embedded culture of continuous improvement – rather than one of blame – which encouraged bottom-up initiatives within a clearly understood framework.

In the survey, the following two statements received favourable ratings, indicating that some staff had positive attitudes to their job and college:

- My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively.
- Staff work well together in teams.

This does not suggest any pervasive crisis in relationships at staff room or course team level. Agreement with the second statement could indicate more of a general satisfaction with relationships with colleagues than a true assessment of the effectiveness of teamwork. However, the survey suggests that what happens within colleges does make a substantial difference to staff attitudes, and that attitudes are by no means determined primarily by the external educational environment.

It is notable that beacon and accredited colleges produced agreement ratings that were substantially better than the average for the survey. In these colleges there was also much less of a gap between the opinions of management and non-management staff. However, caveats apply here. The sample of beacon and accredited colleges was relatively small, and it is reasonable to believe that the combination of public approbation and high inspection grades has an impact on staff morale that is generally positive. Equally, it is likely that an unfavourable inspection report results in some degree of collective depression in morale. Nonetheless, our findings are consistent with the view that positive staff attitudes help to produce successful colleges. In addition, they suggest that the attainment of high levels of efficiency and effectiveness, as defined by the former Further Education Funding Council, have a generally positive impact on staff.

Although the survey results show dissatisfaction among staff employed in the FE sector, it is hoped that the sector will listen to staff and harness the undoubted and widespread commitment that exists. Many of the comments given by staff reflect information gained from other sources, such as Learning PROBE (a diagnostic benchmark tool), that staff genuinely want to be involved and to work to improve further education.

What influences staff satisfaction?

Staff satisfaction is influenced by several interconnecting factors. Managers often consider salary to be the prime motivator of most staff, but research has shown this not to be true. Although salary is important, people often use it as an indication of how much they are appreciated.

Other factors affecting staff satisfaction are:

- clarity – staff knowing what to do
- interest – staff finding the work stimulating
- discretion – staff having some discretion in how the job is performed
- feedback – staff being appreciated for the work they do. (O'Malley, 2000)

Cynthia Scott and Denis Jaffe, in their book *Empowerment*, listed the three key areas that emerged from a survey of employees on satisfaction:

- validation – respect for employees as people; flexibility to meet personal needs; encouragement of learning, development and new skills
- information – knowing why things are being done; getting inside information about the company
- participation – employees having control over how they do their work; involvement in decisions that affect them. (Scott and Jaffe, 1992)

These ideas are reflected throughout much of management theory.

Other views

Many organisations emphasise the importance of staff satisfaction. Here are two examples:

From the Investors in People website:

While 50% of employers claim that employee satisfaction is important to them, it is clear from the research by Investors in People UK that this is not the case. Only 6%, less than one in ten owner managers, considered that employee satisfaction was a major business objective. Significantly, a massive 45% of the UK's bosses put customer satisfaction as their most important business aim.

Employers are missing a trick, as one in four employees stated that when they were happy they were more productive. A further 13% also claimed that they felt that their happiness had a direct effect on customer satisfaction.

The Department of Trade and Industry's point of view:

People who say they work in a great organisation put it down to a knowledge that they know what's going on and how they fit into the bigger picture, and a sense that their contribution is valued and makes a difference. All of this adds up to a sense of opportunity, achievement and excitement.

Staff satisfaction in business and quality models

The importance of well-trained, motivated staff is emphasised by most business and quality models. Many colleges have used at least one of the following:

EFQM Excellence Model

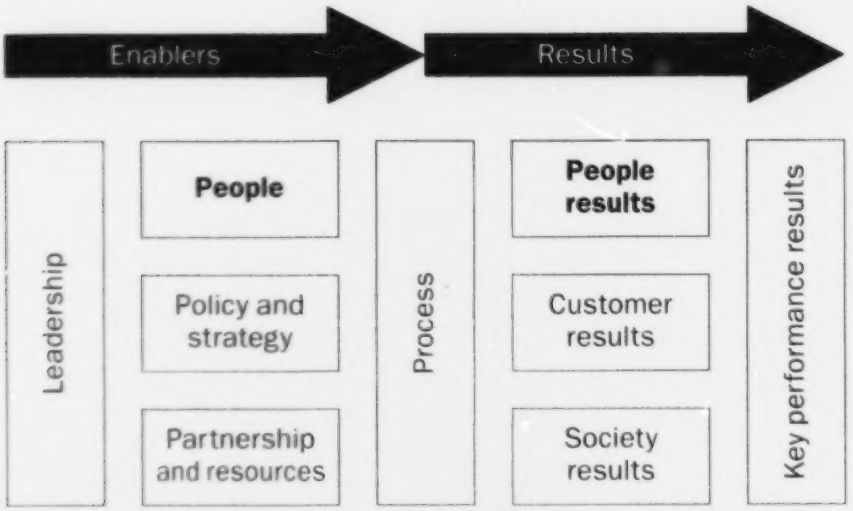
Developed by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and promoted in the UK by the British Quality Foundation (BQF), the Excellence Model is based on nine criteria. Five of these criteria are 'enablers', covering what an organisation does, ie leadership, people, policy and strategy, partnership and resources, and processes. The remaining four criteria are 'results', covering what an organisation achieves, ie people results, customer results, society results and key performance results.

The model helps identify strengths and weaknesses, provides a benchmark against which an organisation can measure itself from year to year and allows an organisation to compare itself against others.

The criteria for 'people results' require an organisation to measure staff perception and to ensure that:

- people are involved and empowered
- people and the organisation have a dialogue
- people are rewarded, recognised and cared for.

Figure 2 EFQM Excellence Model



Investors in People

Investors in People is awarded to organisations that meet criteria laid down for the training and development of people. Developed in 1990 by the National Training Task Force, in collaboration with a number of well-respected organisations, it is based on the premise that an organisation cannot continue to be successful if it does not ally its people's skills with its business needs.

Learning PROBE

Learning PROBE (Promoting Business Excellence) is a diagnostic benchmarking tool, based on Service PROBE, developed by the Learning and Skills Development Agency with the University of Northumbria at Newcastle (UNN) Business Unit. It gives organisations a snapshot of their current state, covering practices and performance across a broad range of areas such as leadership, service processes, people and performance management.

Learning PROBE measures the level of staff empowerment, staff satisfaction and openness as part of the snapshot view of how the college operates. The results give organisations an indication of their strengths and weaknesses and allow them to compare their performance against other organisations.

Survey results

Sample size and response rates

A total of 80 colleges participated in the survey that took place in summer 2000.

Figure 3 Types of college that took part

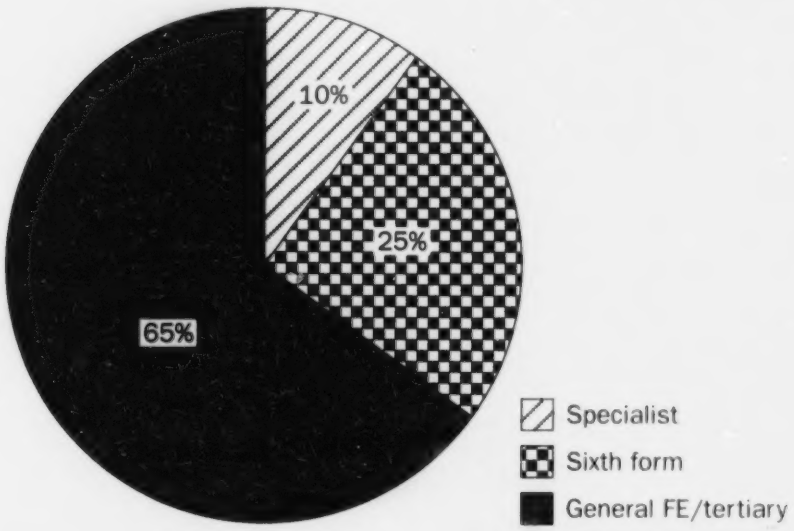


Figure 4 Proportion of beacon and accredited colleges that took part

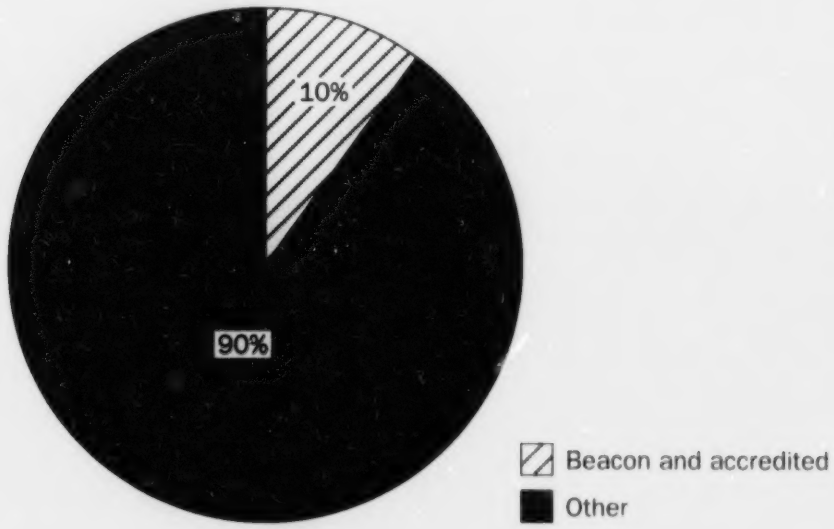
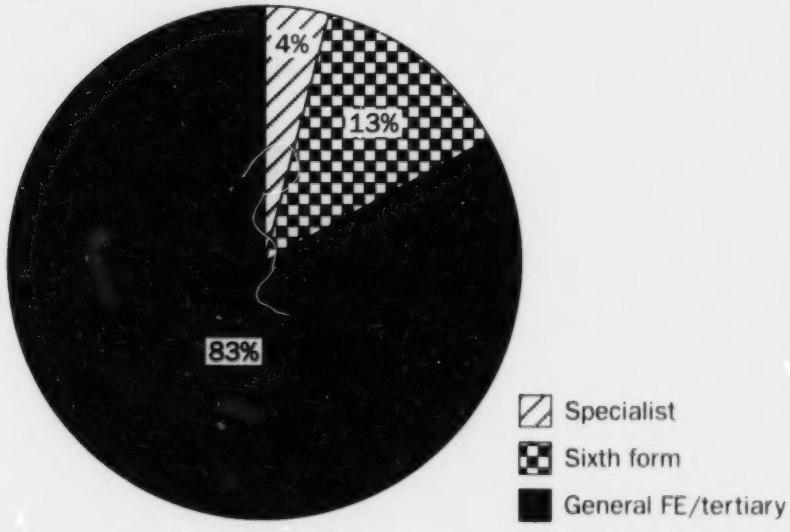


Figure 5 Respondents by college type



A total of 9515 completed questionnaires were received from staff at all levels within the college.

Figure 6 Survey participants by category of staff

Staff category	Number of staff responding	
Role		
Academic (full-time)	3338	(36%)
Academic (part-time)	1607	(18%)
Support (full-time)	2456	(27%)
Support (part-time)	999	(11%)
Management	774	(8%)
Non-management	8741	(92%)
Gender		
Male	2749	(39%)
Female	4382	(61%)
Ethnicity		
Black African	41	(<1%)
Black Caribbean	76	(1%)
Black Other	34	(<1%)
Bangladeshi	4	(<1%)
Indian	94	(1%)
Pakistani	19	(<1%)
Chinese	9	(<1%)
White	8595	(94%)
Other or mixed origins	260	(3%)
Age		
Under 30	930	(10%)
31–40	2178	(24%)
41–50	3579	(39%)
51+	2539	(28%)

Validation of results

As with all self-selecting surveys, the results should be treated with some caution. The sample of participating colleges is not truly representative of the sector, even though it includes different types of college across a wide geographical area. The sample size and response rates between colleges also vary considerably. Individual college sample sizes ranged from 30–1100 and response rates from 20%–98%, with an overall response rate of 38%. It is likely that the survey results under-represent the views of the more apathetic staff, and of staff who doubted the value of exercises of this kind. If anything, the true picture of staff opinion across the sector may be more negative than the results suggest.

The positive statements

Almost without exception, staff considered all the statements as important.

The six statements rated highest for importance were:

- The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.
- The college has a good future.
- The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision.
- Education is central to the management strategy of the college.
- Communication is effective in this college.
- Adequate resources are provided by the college for students.

In fact there were only five statements that more than 10% of staff thought were not important. The lowest mean rating for importance was 3.24, which is well above the mid-point on the scale.

The six statements rated least strongly for importance were:

- Information about strategic and operational goals and performance are communicated effectively.
- Academic and support staff have shared goals.
- Staff are encouraged to take risks or try new things without fear of failure.
- I would recommend the college as a good place to work.
- There is an opportunity for me to progress within the organisation.
- I am not thinking of leaving the college.

There was a narrow spread of importance ratings across all groups of staff.

In contrast, there was a much wider spread in the strength of agreement with the same statements. Strength of agreement was generally much less positive. Staff disagreed with almost half of the statements, giving ratings of just 1 or 2. Even for the statement with the highest agreement level – 'The college encourages feedback from all its customers' – almost a quarter of staff recorded ratings of 1 or 2.

The statements that drew the highest levels of agreement were:

- The college encourages feedback from all its customers.
- Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.
- I understand my role and the contribution I am making to the goals of the college.
- Staff work well together in teams.
- Information about the college is readily available.
- My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively.

The following statements attracted the least agreement:

- Staff feel they have job security.
- Management see complaints as opportunities for improvement rather than threats.
- Staff workplaces are adequate.
- Staff are encouraged to take risks or try new things without fear of failure.
- Communication is effective in this college.
- There is an opportunity for me to progress within the organisation.

Free-text responses

Staff were given two opportunities to provide in-depth written answers.

When asked to identify **one** action that would improve the culture of the college, two broad areas featured commonly in respondents' replies:

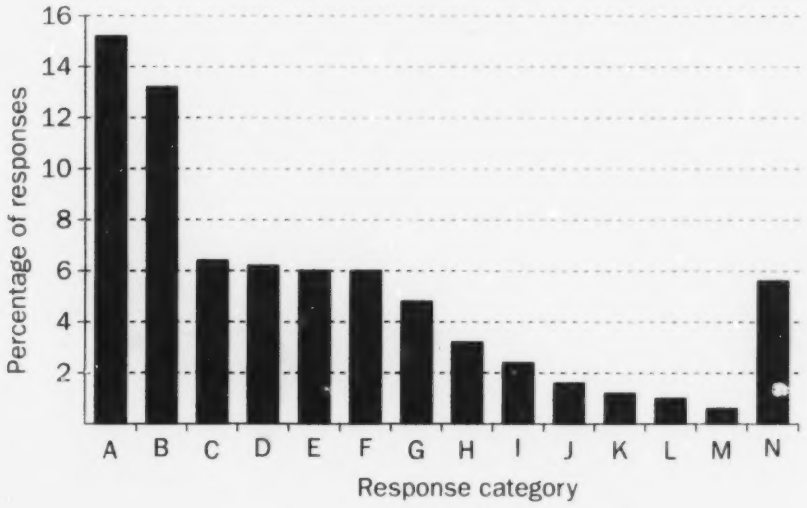
- management/management style
- communications/consultation/involvement.

All the responses to this question were coded using the following categories:

A Management/management style
B Communications/consultation/involvement
C Salary/conditions of service/rewards/progression
D Teaching staff/support staff/interdepartmental relationships/conflict
E Resources/IT
F Value accorded to staff/staff morale
G Workload/paperwork/flexibility
H Priority of education and students v financial objectives
I Student discipline/attitudes
J Equal opportunities/recruitment/fairness in promotion
K Training
L Poor/inappropriate staff
M Minimisation of restructuring/change
N Other

The results are summarised below.

Figure 7 Recommended actions to improve the culture of the college



The second free-text question asked for additional comments. The most common issues raised were:

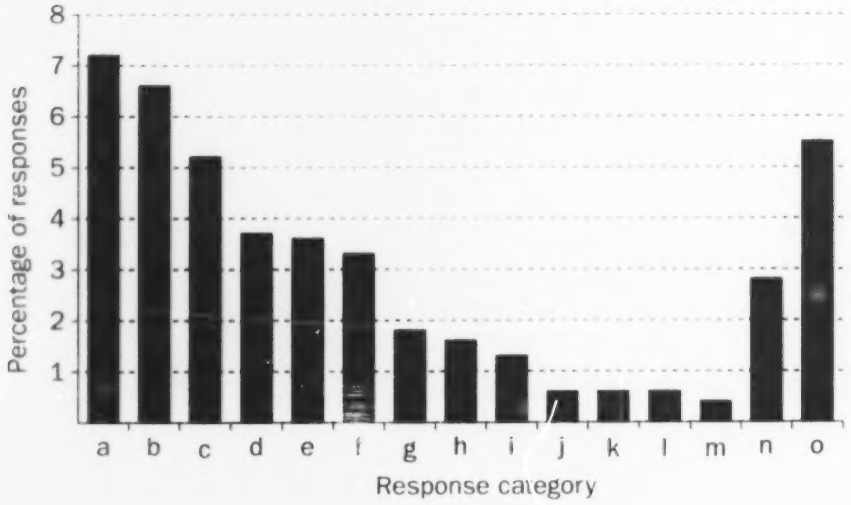
- salary/conditions of service/reward/progression
- management/management style
- resources/IT.

A gain, all responses were coded using the following categories:

a Salary/conditions of service/rewards/progression
b Management/management style
c Resources/IT
d Communication/consultation/involvement
e Value accorded to staff/staff morale
f Workload/paperwork/flexibility
g Teaching staff/support staff/interdepartmental relationships/conflict
h Priority of education and students v financial objectives
i Equal opportunities/recruitment/fairness in promotion
j Student discipline/attitudes
k Good place to work
l Training
m Minimisation of restructuring/change
n Poor/inappropriate staff
o Other

The results are summarised below.

Figure 8 Other comments



Typical recommendations and critical comments

These are examples of typical recommendations and critical comments:

A principalship that genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff and gives regular feedback about staff achievement, rather than saying nothing until something goes wrong.

Ask the general staff for their opinions on issues. Involve them in decision-making and listen to their opinions.

Remove bullying/blame culture.

In general, staff work extremely hard to create an atmosphere that is upbeat, encouraging and supportive of those who wish to benefit from their studies. This is achieved sometimes under difficult circumstances. It is about time that the college started to emphasise its good aspects in a positive way. Let's start to 'blow our own trumpet', perhaps getting students past and present involved – make them feel more part of the college's present and future. Continuing with this theme, please encourage management to lead the way by giving positive feedback to staff whenever possible. Staff should not be in a position where they only have negative feedback as this creates an atmosphere of despondency and disillusionment. Would we treat our students in the same way? As with all good organisations, it is vital that staff are valued and appreciated. So why do some managers (I must stress not all) find it difficult to adopt this approach? It is also important to remember that having no feedback on performance or appropriate support is just as detrimental.

Better communication between sites. Poor communication can lead to isolation and resentment for those who don't see the whole picture.

Improve communication between teaching and non-teaching staff to ensure that all staff work together to achieve college aims and improve the working environment.

The main problem at the college is communication. We have two colleges: one consisting of management, with its own aims and objectives, the other comprising the teaching staff, whose aims and objectives are quite different. Those in middle management unsuccessfully try to maintain a balance between the two.

In all the successful educational establishments I have worked there has been a common core of understanding of the aims and objectives of the school or college, despite disagreements about specifics from time to time. Until this problem is addressed, we will not have an effective college. A near-invisible senior management team does not help this.

How did we achieve Investors in People?

After 6 years in education and then almost another 8 years working at the college, I am still a Grade A lecturer. Until my partner found work, I was claiming Family Credit. My role, workload and responsibilities have increased substantially. There is no opportunity for me to progress and I do not feel valued by decision-makers within the organisation. However, students value me greatly and it is their constant feedback that keeps me going.

The lack of any opportunity for me to progress within the organisation makes me feel depressed.

Salary scales in this area are falling too far behind even local authority rates, causing staff to leave.

Typical positive comments

There were also a number of more positive remarks:

The management team at XXX [one of the college's sites] *is wonderful, especially our centre manager. I have never worked in an environment where I have felt so valued. I enjoy my job thoroughly and am very happy here.*

I appreciate the opportunity to answer this questionnaire. It is the first time I have been asked for my opinion on how the college is run. I hope that the views and concerns expressed by staff will be addressed in a positive and enlightened way.

I feel that there is a very positive attitude within the XXX site, with excellent working/social relationships among staff. This is evident in all communal areas.

I am happy in my job and have an excellent line manager. There is a family atmosphere among the staff here.

Strength of agreement relative to importance

The importance/agreement matrixes, on which much of our survey analysis is based, are an at-a-glance means of identifying the sector's strengths and problem areas in terms of staff attitudes to their jobs. In each matrix, ratings are divided between four boxes, labelled A–D. The solid lines that form the boundaries between the boxes are positioned at the levels of the overall average ratings for importance and agreement. The dotted lines are the average ratings for importance and agreement for the particular cohort of staff concerned.

Broadly speaking, boxes A–D can be interpreted as follows:

A (high importance/high agreement): ratings in this box indicate areas of strength – especially those nearest the top right-hand corner.

B (low importance/high agreement): also indicate areas of strength, but of lesser priority than those in A.

C (low importance/low agreement): potential problem areas, but of lesser priority than those in D.

D (high importance/low agreement): ratings in this box indicate problem areas that need to be confronted – especially those nearest the top left-hand corner.

These categories are only intended as broad guidelines and it would be misleading and unwise to distinguish in this way between ratings that are very close to each other, even though they may be either side of one or both of the overall average boundary lines. (Note here that relative differences across all mean ratings for importance were much smaller than those for level of agreement.) Equally, low levels of agreement may have resulted partly from factors that are external to college management and therefore not directly susceptible to their influence.

The numbered statements can be found on pages 4–5.

Overall results

Figure 9 on page 24 shows the overall mean ratings for *agreement* against the related ratings for *importance*.

There are a number of high importance/low agreement ratings in quadrant D, especially:

The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.

Communication is effective in this college.

- Adequate resources are provided by the college for staff.
- Management are effective in making decisions about the organisation.
- Staff feel they have job security.
- Staff workplaces are adequate.

In contrast, the most notable areas of strength emerging from the survey (high importance/high agreement ratings displayed in quadrant A) were:

- Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.
- Staff work well together in teams.
- The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision.
- My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively.
- The college has a good future.

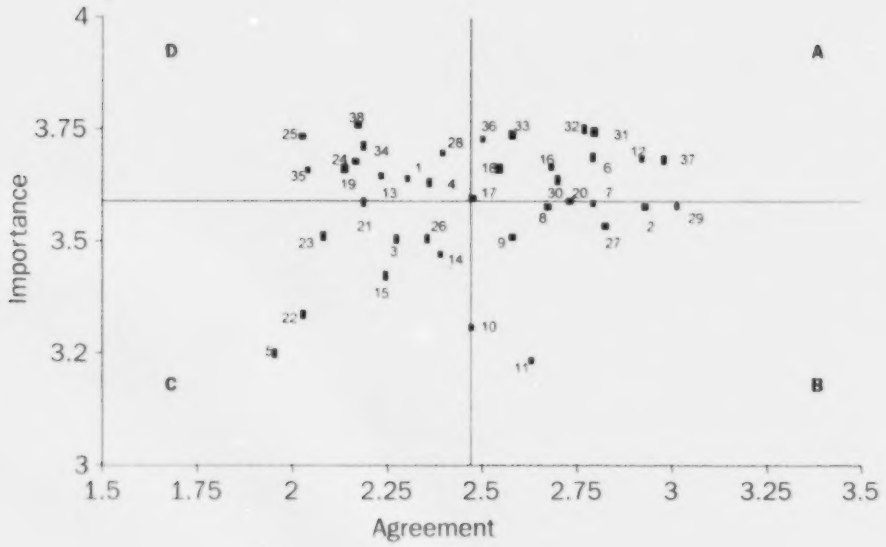
Differences by type of college

Figures 10–13 on pages 25–27 show equivalent importance/agreement ratings at different types of college. The relative ranking of each statement varied little according to type of college when compared with the overall picture.

General FE/tertiary colleges
The pattern of responses from general FE/tertiary colleges, which constituted the large majority of participants, was very similar to the overall pattern in every respect.

Sixth form colleges
The majority of importance ratings for sixth form colleges were slightly lower compared with the overall pattern, whilst relative agreement was notably stronger. Only five statements fell within the overall high importance/low agreement quadrant D, compared with ten in the case of respondents from general FE/tertiary colleges. The statement 'Staff work well together in teams' produced an exception to the general pattern of responses, with respondents at sixth form colleges recording ratings for both importance and agreement that were significantly lower than those from staff at other types of college. There were also relatively higher levels of agreement with the statements 'The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision' and 'The college has a good future'.

Figure 9 Overall importance/agreement matrix



The 38 positive statements

Me

1 I feel valued in this organisation.
2 I understand my role and the contribution I am making to the goals of the college.
3 My views are sought and considered.
4 I feel I have job security.
5 There is an opportunity for me to progress within the organisation.
6 My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively.
7 I have the authority to do a good job.
8 I get sufficient training to do my job effectively.
9 I get feedback from my manager on the work I do.
10 I would recommend the college as a good place to work.
11 I am not thinking of leaving the college.

Staff

12 Staff work well together in teams.
13 Staff views are sought and considered.
14 Staff are involved in planning improvements and setting targets.
15 Academic and support staff have shared goals.
16 Staff know what they are expected to do.
17 Staff know how well they are performing.
18 Staff receive appropriate training to make them effective in their job.
19 Staff feel they have job security.
20 Staff are committed to improving the quality of all aspects of the college.

Management style

21 Staff are not afraid to say what they really think.
22 Staff are encouraged to take risks or try new things without fear of failure.
23 Management see complaints as opportunities for improvement rather than threats.
24 Management are effective in making decisions about the organisation.

Communication

25 Communication is effective in this college.
26 Information about strategic and operational goals and performance are communicated effectively.
27 Information about the college is readily available.
28 Staff are given the information they need to do their job effectively.

Customers

29 The college encourages feedback from all its customers.
30 Complaints are dealt with effectively within the college.

College

31 The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision.
32 The college has a good future.
33 Education is central to the management strategy of the college.
34 Adequate resources are provided by the college for staff.
35 Staff workplaces are adequate.
36 Adequate resources are provided by the college for students.
37 Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.
38 The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.

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Figure 10 Importance/agreement matrix – general FE and tertiary colleges

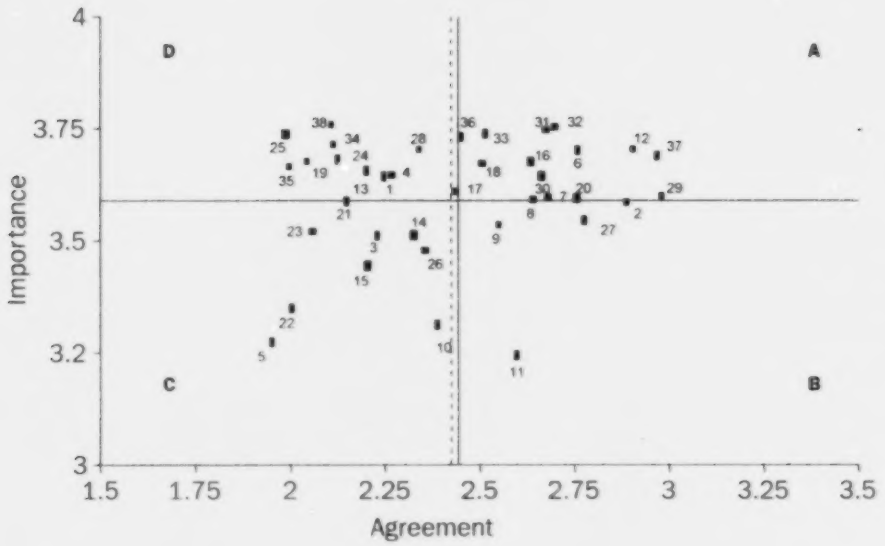
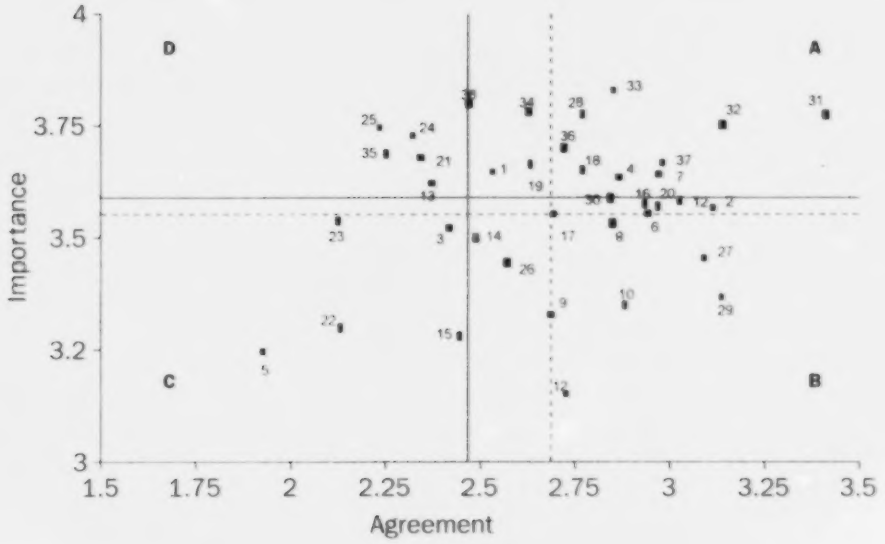


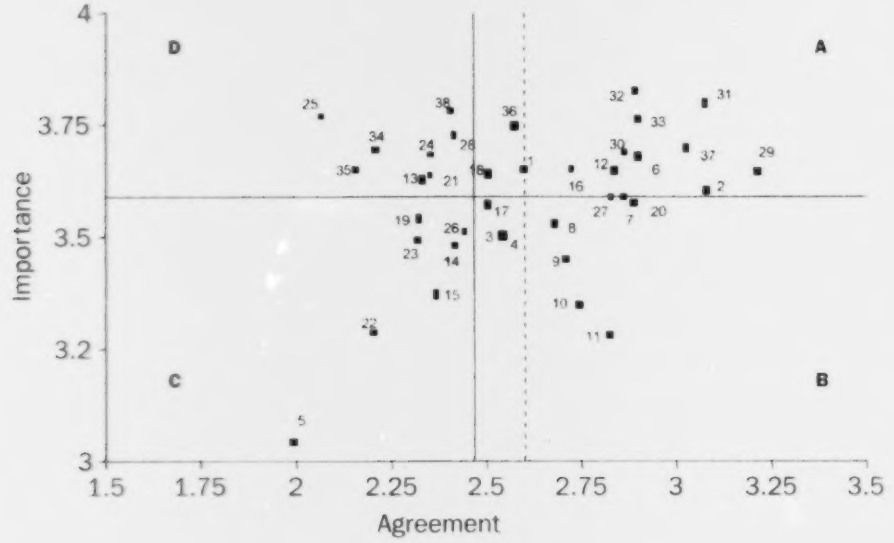
Figure 11 Importance/agreement matrix – sixth form colleges



Specialist colleges

The relative agreement was somewhat stronger at specialist colleges compared with the overall pattern for the sector (see Figure 12 overleaf).

Figure 12 Importance/agreement matrix – specialist colleges



The 38 positive statements

Me

1 I feel valued in this organisation.
2 I understand my role and the contribution I am making to the goals of the college.
3 My views are sought and considered.
4 I feel I have job security.
5 There is an opportunity for me to progress within the organisation.
6 My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively.
7 I have the authority to do a good job.
8 I get sufficient training to do my job effectively.
9 I get feedback from my manager on the work I do.
10 I would recommend the college as a good place to work.
11 I am not thinking of leaving the college.

Staff

12 Staff work well together in teams.
13 Staff views are sought and considered.
14 Staff are involved in planning improvements and setting targets.
15 Academic and support staff have shared goals.
16 Staff know what they are expected to do.
17 Staff know how well they are performing.
18 Staff receive appropriate training to make them effective in their job.
19 Staff feel they have job security.
20 Staff are committed to improving the quality of all aspects of the college.

Management style

21 Staff are not afraid to say what they really think.
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23 Management see complaints as opportunities for improvement rather than threats.
24 Management are effective in making decisions about the organisation.

Communication

25 Communication is effective in this college.
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27 Information about the college is readily available.
28 Staff are given the information they need to do their job effectively.

Customers

29 The college encourages feedback from all its customers.
30 Complaints are dealt with effectively within the college.

College

31 The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision.
32 The college has a good future.
33 Education is central to the management strategy of the college.
34 Adequate resources are provided by the college for staff.
35 Staff workplaces are adequate.
36 Adequate resources are provided by the college for students.
37 Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.
38 The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.

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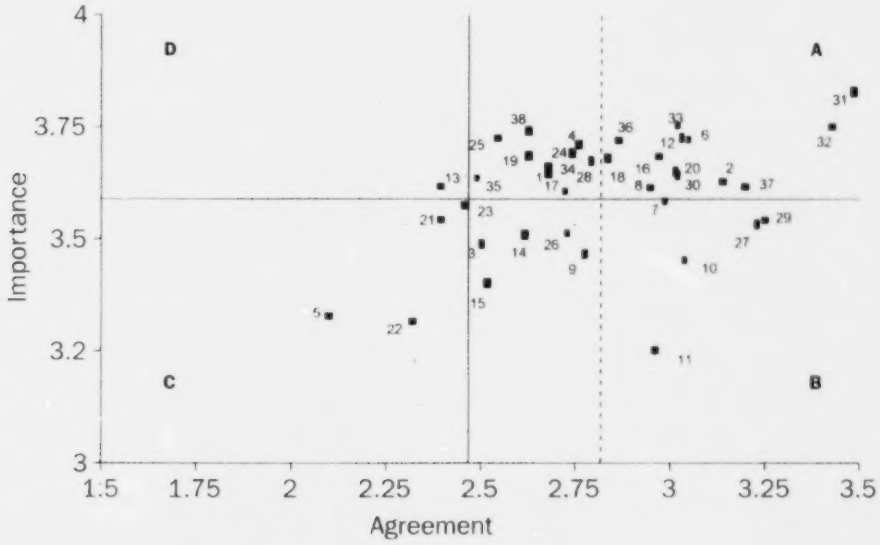
Beacon and accredited colleges

Agreement ratings at beacon and accredited colleges were generally much more positive than for respondents overall. Only one statement fell into the overall high importance/low agreement quadrant D. In contrast, almost two-thirds of the statements lay within the high importance/high agreement quadrant A. Here again, there were notably high levels of agreement with the statements 'The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision' and 'The college has a good future'.

Figure 13 Importance/agreement matrix – beacon and accredited colleges



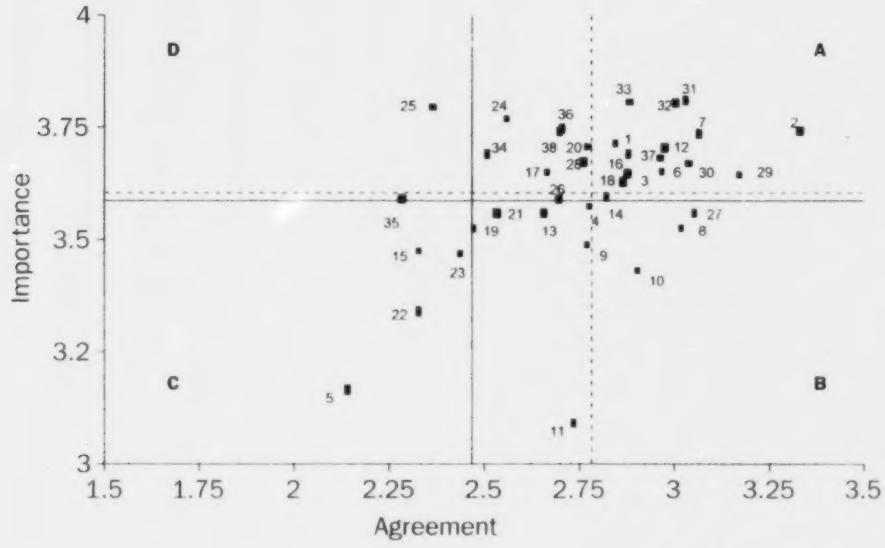
Differences by type of staff

As with college type, the main differences were in the relative strength of agreement profiles, rather than in the rank orderings of the ratings for importance and agreement.

Management v non-management staff

Management staff were more positive in terms of strength of agreement, with only one statement falling within the overall high importance/low agreement quadrant D, compared with 12 for non-management staff. In particular, management staff were much more likely to rate the statement 'I understand my role and the contribution I am making to the goals of the college' highly for both agreement and importance.

Figure 14 Importance/agreement matrix – management staff



The 38 positive statements

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10 I would recommend the college as a good place to work.
11 I am not thinking of leaving the college.

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35 Staff workplaces are adequate.
36 Adequate resources are provided by the college for students.
37 Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.
38 The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.

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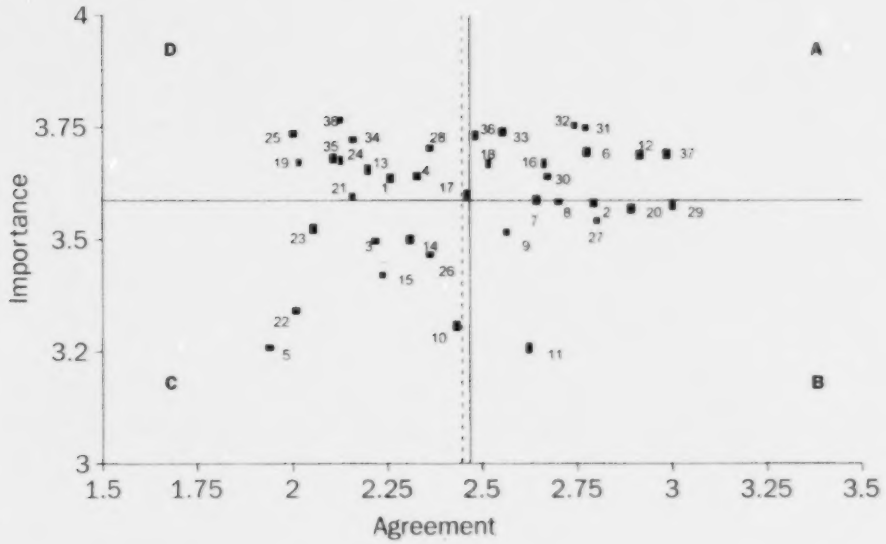
Figure 15 Importance/agreement matrix – non-management staff



Academic v support staff

Support staff showed somewhat more agreement with the statements than academic staff.

Figure 16 Importance/agreement matrix – academic staff

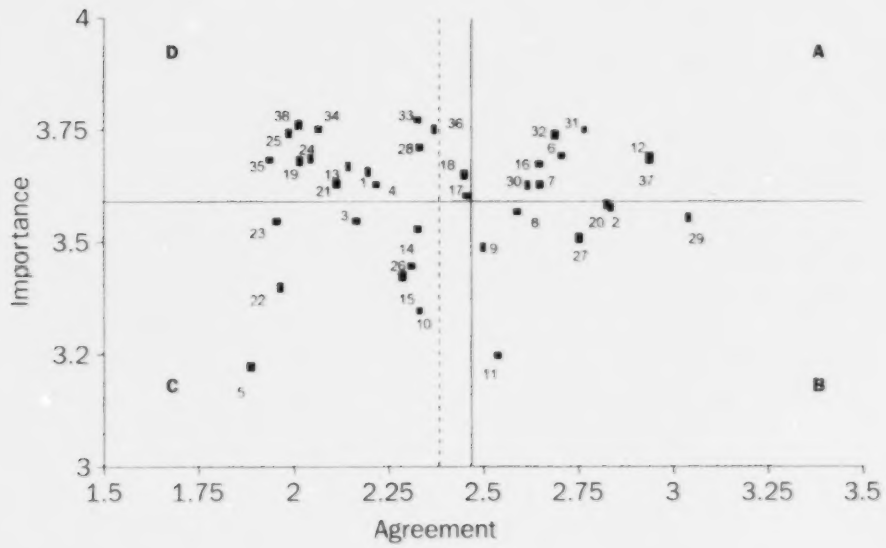
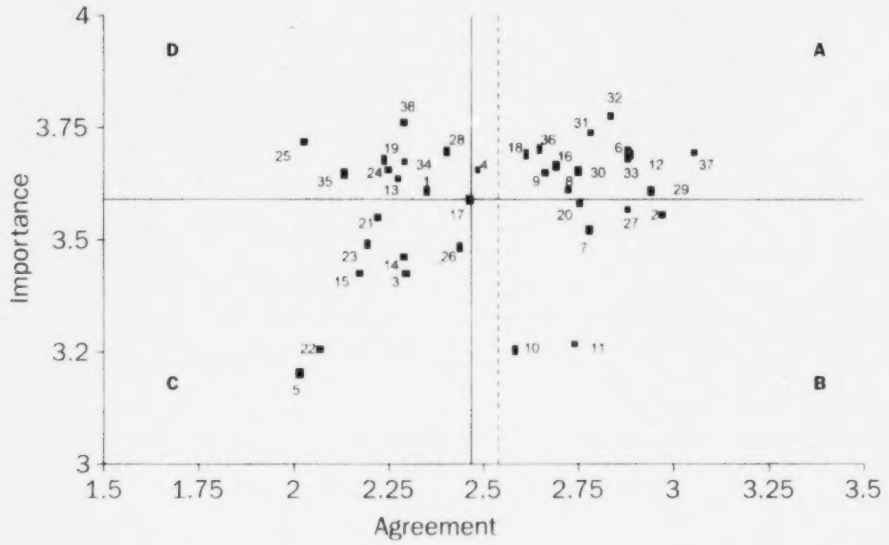


Figure 17 Importance/agreement matrix – support staff



The 38 positive statements

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3 My views are sought and considered.
4 I feel I have job security.
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36 Adequate resources are provided by the college for students.
37 Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.
38 The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.

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Full-time v part-time staff

Part-time staff were also more positive when compared to full-time staff, though the difference was less apparent than that between academic and support staff.

Figure 18 Importance/agreement matrix – full-time staff

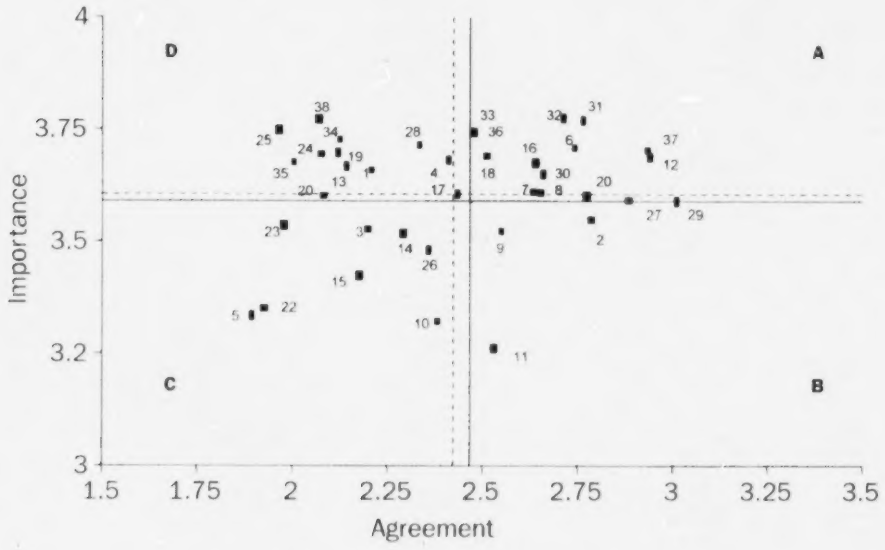
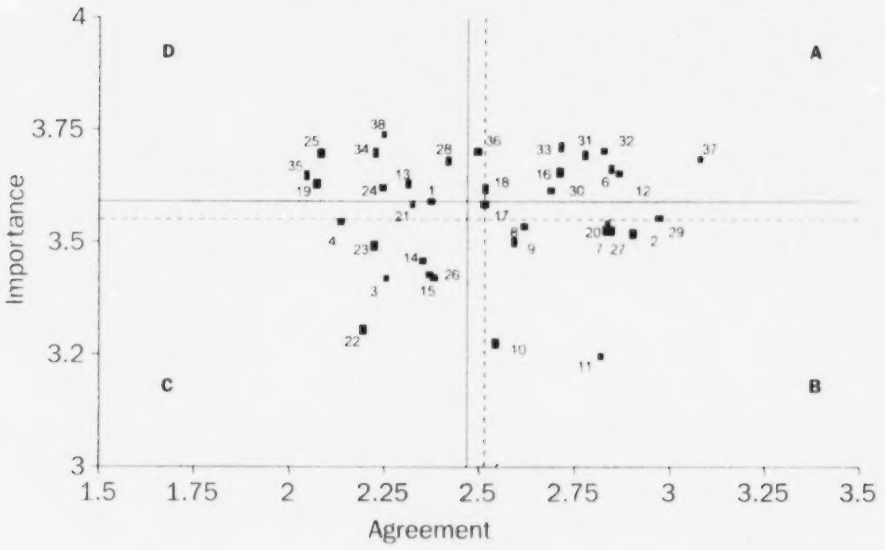


Figure 19 Importance/agreement matrix – part-time staff

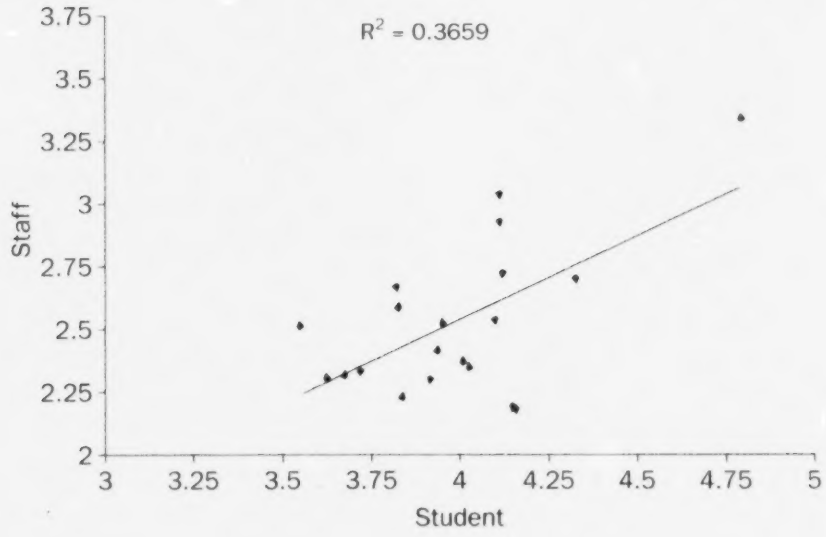


Staff and student satisfaction

The Learning and Skills Development Agency also operates a parallel college benchmarking service for student satisfaction. As there was some overlap between the users of the student benchmarking service and participants in the survey of staff satisfaction, it was possible to investigate the relationship between staff and student. Two comparisons were undertaken, involving student strength of agreement for the statements 'I would encourage somebody else to attend the college' and 'The college has met my expectations', both compared with the overall 'mean of means' average staff agreement rating.

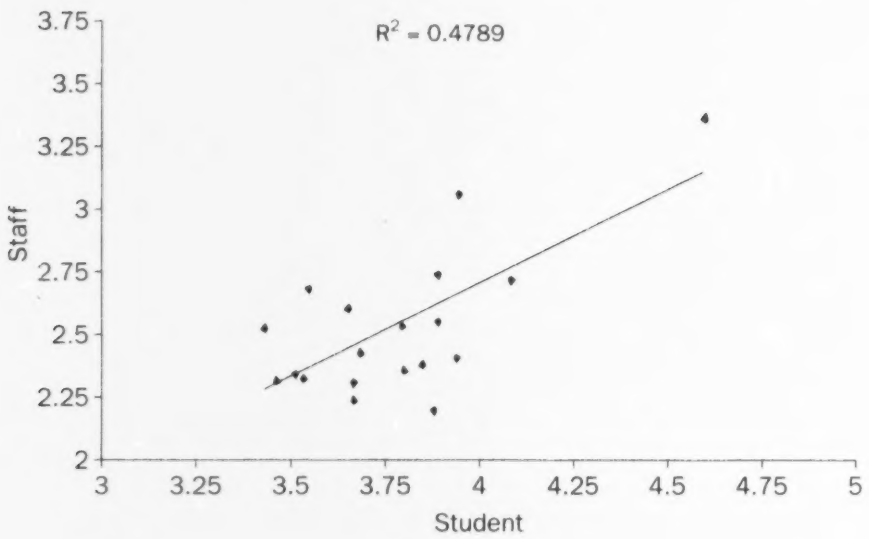
Note
The student questionnaire employed a five-point scale. These analyses were based on the responses from 2024 staff and 14,860 students at 20 colleges.

Figure 20 Students encouraging another to attend v staff average score



The lines of best fit indicated that there was a positive relationship between the relative strength of agreement of staff and the likelihood that students at the same colleges would encourage others to attend.

Figure 21 College meets students' expectations v staff satisfaction average score



The correlation between staff and student opinion was notably stronger in the case of students' attitudes to whether or not the college had met their expectations.

CHAID analysis

The characteristics that best defined those respondents who strongly agreed that 'I would recommend the college as a good place to work' were:

- strong agreement with the statement 'The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff'
- strong agreement with the statement 'I am **not** thinking of leaving the college'
- strong agreement with the statement 'I feel valued in this organisation'.

Over 91% of the respondents to whom all three of the above characteristics applied also strongly agreed that they would recommend their college as a good place to work, compared with some 15% overall. Only 1% indicated any measure of disagreement that they would do so, compared with 49% overall.

The characteristics most associated with respondents who strongly disagreed that they would recommend their college as a good place to work were virtually a mirror image of those outlined above:

- strong disagreement with the statement 'The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff'
- strong disagreement with the statement 'I feel valued in this organisation'
- strong disagreement with the statement 'I am **not** thinking of leaving the college'
- strong disagreement with the statement 'Staff feel they have job security'.

Almost 91% of the respondents to whom all four of the above characteristics applied also strongly disagreed that they would recommend their college as a good place to work, compared with 19% overall. Only 1% recorded any measure of agreement that they would do so, compared with 50% overall.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a technique that helps to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller number of 'factors', each of which contains a combination of correlated variables. The technique gives insight into the ways in which different variables combine in the minds of respondents.

For the staff satisfaction survey, the ratings for the 38 different statements have been reduced to four factors. Individual respondents are likely to have given the same ratings to each of the statements within any one factor.

The statements within each factor are listed in order of their strength of relationship, so that the higher a statement is on the list, the better it defines the factor to which it belongs.

1. Thirteen statements were broadly associated with attitudes to management style, consultation and perceived degree of staff involvement.
2. Seven statements concerned college resources, reputation and perceived job security.
3. Eleven statements concerned staff commitment and relationships, including those with students and other 'customers'.
4. Seven statements dealt with clarity of role, authority and support.

Figure 22 Factor analysis of statements

Factor 1
Management style, consultation and involvement

- Management see complaints as opportunities for improvement rather than threats.
- Staff are not afraid to say what they really think.
- I feel valued in this organisation.
- Staff are encouraged to take risks or try new things without fear of failure.
- The college genuinely cares about the welfare of its staff.
- Staff views are sought and considered.
- My views are sought and considered.
- I would recommend the college as a good place to work.
- Management are effective in making decisions about the organisation.
- Education is central to the management strategy of the college.
- I am not thinking of leaving the college.
- Staff are involved in planning improvements and setting targets.
- There is an opportunity for me to progress within the organisation.

Factor 2
Resources, reputation and job security

- Adequate resources are provided by the college for staff.
- Adequate resources are provided by the college for students.
- Staff workplaces are adequate.
- The college has a good future.
- The college has a reputation for the quality of its provision.
- Staff feel they have job security.
- I feel I have job security.

Factor 3
Staff commitment and relationships

- Staff are committed to improving the quality of all aspects of the college.
- Academic and support staff have shared goals.
- The college encourages feedback from all its customers.
- Staff know what they are expected to do.
- Staff work well together in teams.
- Information about strategic and operational goals and performance are communicated effectively.
- Information about the college is readily available.
- Complaints are dealt with effectively within the college.
- Staff are given the information they need to do their job effectively.
- Communication is effective in this college.
- Equal opportunities are embedded into the culture of the college.

Factor 4
Clarity of role, authority and support

- I get feedback from my manager on the work I do.
- My manager gives me the support I need to do my job effectively.
- I get sufficient training to do my job effectively.
- Staff receive appropriate training to make them effective in their job.
- I have the authority to do a good job.
- Staff know how well they are performing.
- I understand my role and the contribution I am making to the goals of the college.

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Further information

Department of Trade and Industry
www.dti.gov.uk

European Foundation for Quality Management
www.efqm.org uk

raising quality
and achievement
programme

This book contains the results of the Learning and Skills Development Agency's survey of staff opinions about their jobs in colleges. Although there is dissatisfaction, the results clearly show that staff genuinely want to be involved in planning improvements, setting targets and working to improve education in the learning and skills sector. It is over up to senior management teams to harness the undoubted and widespread commitment that exists.

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